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CIA (D)

The CIA and the Death of Trujillo



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DICTATOR Rafael Trujillo was gunned down on May 30, 1961, thus ending his 31-year tyranny over the Dominican Republic. His military police efficiently rounded up the assassins and tortured them to death.

We have now learned that before they died, they gave detailed confessions implicating the Central Intelligence Agency in the assassination plot. The tortured men believed the CIA not only supported them but would save them.

According to their confession, the CIA was supposed to prevent the old tyrant's murderous son, Ramfis, from returning to Santo Domingo. Nevertheless, he flew home in a chartered plane and personally directed the torture.

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HIS FATHER had been bushwhacked on a lonely highway by a few military and civilian marksmen, backed by a conspiracy of 20 to 40 others, with supporters in the hundreds. The military security forces hauled in dozens — some say hundreds — for torture. From their agonized confessions, a detailed summary was written and presented to Ramfis, who has since died.

The existence of the summary, however, is attested to by sources close to the surviving Trujillo family members. We have also been in contact with the family itself, but they refuse to discuss the CIA's role in the assassination.

They would say only that they regret Rafael Trujillo was not informed by the CIA of the plot against him. "After all, he

was not an enemy. He should have been told," a family spokesman said.

One Trujillista veteran, now a respected businessman, acknowledged that he had helped compile the summary. "The CIA helped get the guns and gave the plotters encouragement," he said in a statement to us.

He charged that the plotters "were urged on by Lear Reed," a former U.S. embassy aide in Santo Domingo, who was regarded by his colleagues as a CIA man, but left the Dominican Republic about eight months before the assassination.

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AFTER REED left, according to the death-throes confessions of the assassins, they kept close contact with two U.S. diplomats whom they call "Mutt" and "Jeff" after the tall and short comic strip characters.

Messages were carried from the plotters to the CIA, according to the tortured men's last words, by a brave young Dominican pediatrician, Dr. Robert Reid. After the assassination, he hid three of the plotters. When the secret police closed in, the doctor committed suicide.

Footnote: U.S. intelligence sources confirm they were aware of the plot and kept abreast of it in a general way. But they deny that the CIA was a direct participant. But denials or not, the tortured men thought they had U.S. approval and they expected U.S. help.

(Written with Les Whitten)